

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
SEPTEMBER 12, 2013
BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

General Information on Funding Sources:

After the annual budget process, WMECO gave the Assessors information on personal property values for Fiscal Year 2014 that provided over \$300,000 in unexpected tax revenue. This very unusual circumstance allows the town to fund much of this Special Town Meeting Warrant with taxation rather than having to use reserves. Taxation is recommended as the funding source for all non-sewer expenses. For sewer articles, Retained Earnings is recommended to fund a Fiscal Year 2013 deficit and for all Fiscal Year 14 expenses. For capital sewer expenses (Articles #14-15), sewer borrowing is recommended.

Both the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee unanimously recommend approval of all articles, and the funding sources of the motions.

ARTICLE 1

Shared Animal Control Officer

The Town eliminated its Animal Control Officer in Fiscal Year 2009. Since then, the required duties have placed an increasing burden on the Police Department and Board of Health. Additionally, state law now requires that each town have an Animal Control Officer (ACO). Montague has worked with the towns of Greenfield and Deerfield to come up with a plan for a shared full-time ACO, with Greenfield being the lead town. It is anticipated that the ACO will spend 50% of his/her time in Greenfield, and 25% each in Deerfield and Montague. The \$14,070 represents Montague's share of this position for Fiscal Year 2014.

ARTICLES 4-9

Implement Pay & Classification Study. These articles are necessary for the implementation of the Pay and Classification Study done by Stone Consulting, Inc. and accepted by the Board of Selectmen. The study was done to determine appropriate pay ranges for all full-time employees as well as permanent part-time employees. Positions were rated and placed on new pay grades. Within the new grade, each employee was placed on the step that provided an equal or higher Fiscal Year 2014 base wage when compared to the Fiscal Year 2014 base wage of the prior scale. Minimum grades were determined for employees who had at least 5 or 10 years in their current position. At the time of writing both the IBPO (police union) and non-union employees have accepted the new scale. Contract negotiations are still in progress for the other unions.

In order to implement the study, several articles are needed. Article #4 amends the Schedule 1 (Wages for Elected Officials) voted at the Annual Town Meeting. Article #5 amends the Schedule 2 (Wages for Appointed Officials) voted at the Annual Town Meeting. Articles #6-9 appropriate the funds needed to implement the study for each of four employee groups: IBPO, Non-Union, TOMEA (the union of management, professional, and clerical workers) and UE (most DPW and WPCF employees). If Articles #7 and #8 are approved and the final contract negotiations require additional funding, there will have to be an additional appropriation at a later town meeting to fund and accept those contracts.

ARTICLE 10 **Increase the Fiscal Year 2014 Debt Budget.** After the Annual Town Budget was approved, it was learned that two temporary borrowings had been “rolled-over” too many times, and payments had to be made towards the principal. These required payments are \$6,100 on the Public Safety Facility Bond Anticipation Note (BAN), and \$3,652 on the Sheffield School Roof BAN. The Treasurer was later notified that principal and interest payments on the FRCOG Brownfield loan were due beginning in September 2013. The amounts due for the Brownfields loan total \$8,263 for the year, bringing the total amount needed to \$18,015.

ARTICLE 11 **WPCF Prior Year Bills.** In Fiscal Year 2013, the main WPCF budget ran short. Transfers were made at the end of the year from the WPCF Debt, WPCF Employee Benefits, DPW Subsidiary and DPW Capital budgets, but the amounts that could be transferred to the main WPCF budget were limited by statute. As a result, the June bill for solid waste disposal from the FCSWMD could not be paid, and only \$5,000 could be paid on the May FCSWMD bill. This article funds payment of these outstanding bills.

ARTICLE 12 **Use of Retained Earnings to Reduce Sewer Rates.** This annual article requests the use of \$120,000 of Sewer Retained Earnings to reduce sewer rates.

ARTICLES 13-16 **Industrial Park Sewer Emergency.** These four articles all relate to the repair of a gravity sewer main that is in poor condition and several sections of sewer lines that have collapsed. The town received permission from the Department of Revenue to spend in excess of appropriations to pay for costs associated with the emergency, but the costs must still be funded. There are two types of costs associated with the problem, operating and capital. Operating expenses include bypass pumping around the collapsed sections of the gravity sewer main and bypass hauling of sanitary sewerage. The Fiscal Year 2013 operating expenses created a deficit of \$81,926.31 that must now be funded (**Article #13**). The additional operating costs for Fiscal Year 2014 are estimated at \$80,000 (**Article #16**). The capital expenses include the gravity sewage main line replacement and associated costs such as surveying, engineering, construction, and police details. These capital costs are broken down into two articles. **Article #14** funds the emergency replacement. **Article #15** funds the replacement of additional gravity sewer main line that is in poor condition.

ARTICLE 17 **Prior Year Bills.** There were a total of 3 bills for Fiscal Year 2013 that were not received in time to be paid in Fiscal Year 2013. They include a \$1,900 bill from the Franklin County Sheriff’s office regarding an eviction, and 2 smaller office supply bills.

ARTICLE 18 **DPW Groundskeeper.** The DPW Superintendent submitted a supplemental requested for a new Groundskeeper, but it was not incorporated into the Fiscal Year 2014 operating budget request. The position is particularly important to the new fields being installed at Unity Park, which will quickly fall into disrepair

without proper maintenance. The position would also provide much needed assistance to the current groundskeeper, and would also be a significant help in shoveling and other winter duties. The requested amount is for a full year, but the part that won't be spent on wages will be available to be transferred to employee benefits at the end of the year to offset those costs.

ARTICLE 19 **Court Judgment.** The article is self-explanatory.

ARTICLE 20 **Transfer Free Cash to Town Stabilization.** This article continues the practice of moving Free Cash that is not expected to be needed to reduce the following year's levy into Stabilization.

ARTICLE 21 **Pay TFFD Taxes.** The town took possession of 25 Sixth Street. While the town can abate back taxes owed on a property when the town takes possession, it does not have the ability to waive taxes owed to the Turners Falls Fire District.

ARTICLE 22 **Change Funding for GMRSD Fiscal Year 2014 Assessment.** As part of the annual budget process, the Finance Committee determines the "Affordable Assessment" based on allocating 48.5% of general estimated revenue to the GMRSD. Any recommended appropriation in excess of this "Affordable Assessment" is funded from Stabilization. If the additional tax revenue described in the General Information had been known earlier, it would have increased the "Affordable Assessment" and would have eliminated the need to fund part of the GMRSD Assessment from Stabilization. This article replaces the use of Stabilization with Taxation.

ARTICLE 23 **Sheffield Boiler.** One of the boilers at the Sheffield School is in need of repair or replacement. The town paid almost \$22,000 to repair another boiler at Sheffield in 2011. The Capital Improvements Committee and representatives from the Energy Committee collaborated with the GMRSD Facilities Manager to determine the best long-term fix. The cost to fix the 20 year old boiler is almost \$40,000. The CIC looked at the costs/benefits of repairing the boiler, replacing it with a new oil boiler, or replacing it with a new gas boiler. Replacement costs, estimated operating costs, and fuel efficiency were all considered. The final recommendation is to replace the boiler. Although the town has not as yet obtained a bid for this project, the Capital Improvements Committee estimates that the cost may be up to \$110,000. This is considered a conservative estimate. We are asking to appropriate this amount with the understanding that when it is bid the actual cost may be less.